



**Joint Appeal Church World Service and Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe:
Urge Governments to Resettle Substantial Numbers of Syrian Refugees, Uphold Commitments to Protection**

Church World Service (CWS), a humanitarian organization representing 37 Protestant, Anglican and Orthodox communions and 33 refugee resettlement offices across the United States, and Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME), bringing together 30 Anglican, Orthodox and Protestant churches and church-related organizations working on migration and integration, refugees and asylum, and against racism and discrimination, from 19 countries all over Europe, call on the international community to extend welcome to Syrian refugees.

Today, there are more than 60 million people displaced around the world, the highest number in nearly 70 years. More than eight million Syrians are internally displaced and four million Syrian refugees are seeking safety in the region.. Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, Iraq and Egypt currently host around four million Syrian refugees. Individuals from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, Eritrea and other countries are fleeing war, conflict and persecution and seeking safety in Europe in increasing numbers. A combination of deteriorating conditions in refugee hosting countries and the lack of safe, legal and timely access to a safe third country forces men, women and children to take perilous journeys and risk falling prey to traffickers or even worse, losing their lives.

The humanitarian crisis in Syria is complex, requiring international leadership on a variety of solutions. Countries must continue to address the root causes of displacement, but never as an excuse to delay assistance to individuals in urgent need. Europe and the United States must increase their support to UNHCR, humanitarian organizations, and refugee hosting countries to ensure infrastructure can adequately support refugees. It is imperative that wherever they are, refugees have the freedom to move, the right to work, and the ability for their children to attend school. From their direct and extensive experience working with displaced and vulnerable populations, CWS, CCME and their members insist that all countries' migration and refugee policies be rooted in a humanitarian, rights-based and hospitable approach. Every effort must be made to save the lives of refugees and migrants in jeopardy, including expanding protection space and increasing the capacity of civilian search and rescue operations for migrants in transit, including at sea.

It is critical that refugees have access to protection, both in the region and through asylum, refugee resettlement and humanitarian admissions programs in Europe and the United States. CWS and CCME urge governments to expand legal and safe avenues for people to seek safety, to expedite procedures so that people have access to protection as quickly as possible, and to enhance family tracing and reunification capacities. By welcoming refugees, both Europe and the United States can play a strategic role in alleviating pressure on host countries in the region and providing opportunities for a new life for vulnerable populations. In order for relocation and resettlement to truly become a durable solution, access must be timely and ample resources must be provided to help refugees integrate and thrive as they rebuild their lives.

People of faith across the globe have demonstrated the best of humanity through acts of welcome and the provision of humanitarian assistance, which governments should support and which should never be blocked or criminalized. The hospitality, welcome and cooperation of communities are powerful antidotes to dangerous xenophobic and anti-Muslim rhetoric stemming from a small but loud contingent. CWS and CCME affirm that all vulnerable persons in need of protection must be welcomed, regardless of their ethnicity, legal status, or religious affiliation. We encourage governments to maintain regular dialogue and collaboration with civil society, including congregations and faith-based organizations, as they are eager to help refugees with both immediate needs and longer-term integration assistance. Communities, schools, congregations, and employers are welcoming refugees and helping them integrate in their new homes. In turn, refugees contribute to their new communities with their inspiring perseverance and skills, dedicated work ethic and entrepreneurship that help revitalize and bolster local economies.

Given the strain on countries in the host region, CWS and CCME appeal to the United States and Europe to substantially contribute to resettling the 10 percent of Syrian refugees considered by UNHCR to be particularly vulnerable and in need of resettlement. As faith-based organizations, we cannot sit idly by while our Syrian brothers and sisters struggle and even perish as they seek safety from violence that has forced them from their homes. Decisions made today, in the wake of this humanitarian and displacement emergency, will go down in history as either celebrated leadership or dismal apathy toward our fellow human beings. The world is watching, including millions of individuals offering up their homes and hands in solidarity and demanding leadership from their governments. Let us not disappoint them, nor our displaced brothers and sisters in their time of need.

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